

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Praises Senegal as Example of Democratic Accountability

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 27 June 2013

Washington — President Obama said Africa is “a continent on the move,” with six of the 10 fastest-growing economies in the world, and he highlighted Senegal as one of Africa’s most stable democracies and strongest U.S. partners.

Speaking with Senegalese President Macky Sall in Dakar June 27, Obama said it is “a moment of great progress and great promise for the continent,” as African countries like Senegal are seeing economic growth, empowering their citizens, and making improvements in their democratic governance.

“As more Africans across this continent stand up and demand governments that are accountable and serve the people, I believe Senegal can be a great example,” he said.

“Senegal has never suffered a military coup. There are free and fair elections, repeated transfers of power — peacefully — a vibrant civil society, a strong press, and dozens of political parties,” Obama said.

He praised Sall for pursuing “ambitious reforms” to increase openness, transparency and accountability in Senegal, and said history has shown that open and responsive governments are “more effective in delivering basic services” and “more successful in attracting the trade and investment that creates jobs and lifts people out of poverty.”

He also thanked Senegal for its peacekeeping missions across the continent, including the country’s current efforts in Mali.

Obama said the United States will continue to stand with the Senegalese people in support of their democracy to help show that a democratic government delivers justice, progress and jobs.

“The United States will remain one of Senegal’s strongest partners in development — from new roads and bridges, so merchants can get their goods to the market, to new textbooks and schools, including the Internet, so that more students can learn,” he said.

According to a June 27 White House fact sheet, in 2012 the Obama administration provided more than \$292 million to support Senegal and other sub-Saharan African countries in their efforts to broaden political participation and improve governance.

The United States “will remain a steady partner as they

continue to work to strengthen electoral processes, ensure transparency and accountability in government, and provide security while respecting and protecting universal rights and fundamental freedoms,” the fact sheet said.

In his remarks, Sall said Obama’s visit will help to further build trust for Senegal’s corporate and business environment, and that Africa’s development will come through partnership with private investors and trade.

“This has been a decade towards democratization, and this is a prerequisite for the development of Africa,” Sall said. “We have tremendous natural resources. We have a lot of human resources. We need infrastructure to accompany the development of all these resources, but all this in the context of good governance, otherwise these resources will be in vain.”

Continued U.S. development support “should enable us to further boost the already excellent relations at the political and economic levels. And I’m sure that this will give an additional boost to our relationship,” he said.

Obama will remain in Senegal until June 28, when he will fly to South Africa to meet with South African leaders and visit Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela and other anti-apartheid leaders were imprisoned.

The president will then travel to Tanzania July 1–2 before returning to Washington July 3.

U.S. Estimates Its Ability to Store Carbon Underground

27 June 2013

Washington — The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has calculated the carbon storage capacity of the United States. The data can be used in a strategy to counter climate change by storing carbon emissions in rock to prevent their release into the atmosphere.

The United States has the potential to store about 3,000 metric gigatons of carbon dioxide in geologic basins throughout the country, according to the first-ever national carbon-sequestration assessment released June 26 by the USGS. The assessment comes on the heels of a national plan to combat climate change announced by President Obama June 25.

“This USGS research is groundbreaking because it is the first realistic view of technically accessible carbon storage capacity in these basins,” said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell in a press release from the Department of the Interior. “If enough of this capacity also proves to be environmentally and economically viable, then geologic carbon sequestration could help us reduce carbon dioxide

emissions that contribute to climate change.”

Technically accessible storage resources are those that can be accessed using today’s technology. The most common method of geologic carbon storage involves pressurizing carbon dioxide into a liquid and then injecting it into subsurface rock layers for long-term storage.

“Today’s assessment from the USGS is just the latest example of how the Department of the Interior is applying rigorous, peer-reviewed science to some of our nation’s most complex land- and resource-management challenges,” said Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes. “Nowhere is this more important than the issue of climate change, and today’s new research adds to the USGS’s groundbreaking work in biological carbon sequestration to better inform our carbon reduction efforts.”

The rock layers included in the assessment were determined to have natural seals to prevent carbon dioxide from escaping. The assessment also focused only on rock layers located at depths at which carbon dioxide would stay under enough pressure to remain liquid.

How a Quiet Pennsylvania Town Changed U.S. History in 1863

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 26 June 2013

Washington — From July 1 to July 3, Americans are marking the 150th anniversary of what is arguably the most historically pivotal and symbolic battle of the country’s bloody 1861–1865 Civil War, the Battle of Gettysburg.

In 1863 the small college town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, became the site of the largest battle that has ever been fought on the North American continent. For three days, an invading Confederate army of more than 70,000 troops faced off against more than 90,000 Union soldiers. At least 46,000 were killed, wounded or captured, and it remains the place where the most Americans have ever fought and died.

President Abraham Lincoln would later mark the dedication of its military cemetery with his famous Gettysburg Address, in which he defined the war as a struggle to affirm the concept that “all men are created equal” through the Union’s quest to end slavery, and to maintain America’s democratic experiment in a government that is “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

At the time of the battle, the outcome of the Civil War was by no means certain. Although the Northern states had a large advantage in the number of soldiers, equipment and other means to wage war, the Southern states had better strategic commanders. The South was also in a position to

gain recognition by European powers who could help force Lincoln to settle for a negotiated peace that would result in an independent Confederate States of America that maintained slavery.

The Battle of Gettysburg was the culmination of a monthlong campaign by Confederate General Robert E. Lee to take the war into Northern territory, defeat the Union Army on its own soil, and threaten Lincoln’s government in Washington. A Southern victory would have strengthened Northern politicians who favored a peace settlement and could have undermined Lincoln’s chance to win re-election.

Lee, whose previous battlefield successes had earned him a reputation for being “invincible,” faced an untested Union commander, General George Meade. Meade was not only sent to stop the invasion but, like his predecessors, was under pressure from Lincoln to use the North’s material advantages to overwhelm and destroy the smaller Confederate forces. At the same time, he had to stay between Lee’s army and Washington to protect the U.S. Capitol.

The battle began almost by chance when a small Confederate force encountered a Union cavalry division in Gettysburg while they were foraging for supplies. Once word went out to the commanders on both sides, both armies converged for what they knew would be a decisive battle.

Confederate forces very nearly succeeded in capturing the hill known as Little Round Top, from which they could have easily pummeled Union forces with artillery fire. They were stopped by a small number of troops led by Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, a former Maine college professor, who executed an unusual assault maneuver when his forces were low on ammunition and completely surprised the attackers.

July 3 saw the climax of the battle, with Lee certain that a direct assault on the center of the Union lines would break their defenses and force them to retreat. Approximately 13,000 Confederate forces under General George Pickett advanced en masse, but the result was a complete disaster for the South. Union troops killed, captured or wounded more than half of the Confederate fighters, and the operation, now known as Pickett’s Charge, not only lost the battle, but was an event from which the South never recovered psychologically.

In American historical mythology, the farthest point of Pickett’s advance is now known as “the high-water mark of the Confederacy.” Gettysburg marked the last time Confederate forces would be able to invade the North in large numbers. Lee had lost one-third of his army, and his mission from that point on was an ultimately futile effort

to prevent Union forces from capturing the Confederate capitol in Richmond, Virginia, and end the war. His defeat also ruined Southern hopes that European countries would intervene on their behalf.

Even with the Civil War still raging, Northern politicians recognized the significance of Gettysburg and decided to dedicate the Soldiers National Cemetery at the site to honor the Union dead. They invited President Lincoln to deliver remarks at the November 19, 1863, dedication, and he used the occasion to articulate what is now considered one of the most important speeches in American history.

Lincoln paid tribute to those who gave “their last full measure of devotion” to a cause he said was even greater than preserving the unity of the United States. The soldiers died for the idea of a nation “conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

It is up to the living, he argued, to ensure that they did not die for nothing, and to work toward a “new birth of freedom” for a country, ultimately, in which everyone, regardless of skin color, would be equal under the law.

Farming, Marketing Tips from U.S. Agency Bear Fruit in Morocco

26 June 2013

Washington — Abderrahime Mantourane wants to build a business off the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation's recent investments in Morocco's fruit tree sector. Yet the 29-year-old doesn't necessarily need to own any trees to accomplish that. Instead, he offers hard work, right timing, know-how and results for his customers.

“Many people in this area continue to farm the traditional way,” Mantourane said. “But through training, they can learn how to grow and harvest more efficiently. That's where we can provide services.”

In August 2012, Mantourane helped form the Ourika Cooperative for the Advancement of Agriculture to provide on-farm training, harvesting and orchard rehabilitation services. The group now has 21 employees and markets to farmers in the fields fed by the Ourika River south of Marrakech.

The Ourika cooperative plans to sell olives, as well as make and sell olive oil, on behalf of the landowners and split the profits. Mantourane believes the group has found a niche because many farmers in the region do little to maintain their trees; many do not prune in a way to maximize sunlight on inner branches, resulting in smaller-than-possible harvests.

The group received field and classroom training on good agricultural practices like maintaining the soil, collecting olives in a way to maintain quality, protecting trees against diseases and insect pests, and pruning. They also learned marketing and business skills through MCC's Fruit Tree Productivity Project, part of the agency's five-year, \$698 million compact with Morocco.

The \$340 million Fruit Tree Productivity Project aims to strengthen the agricultural sector and reduce volatility in agricultural production and farm revenues by rehabilitating existing olive trees; expanding smallholder production of olive and almond trees; helping farmers move from high-water-use, low-value cereal grains to low-water-use, high-value and drought-resistant commercial fruit tree species; and increasing irrigation efficiency and productivity of olive and date trees.

Another member of the cooperative, Hajiba Radi, joined as a first step toward her goal of moving out of her parents' house and becoming independent. She previously worked as a nanny; if all goes well, she wants to open her own offices where she can sell olives and her own line of olive oils.

If things go really well, she said, she would love to walk into a supermarket one day and find a bottle of her olive oil on the shelf — “with a sticker with the price on the bottle.”

She also hopes she can encourage other women to work in the agricultural sector. Seven of the cooperative's members are women.

“This is a region where agriculture is what people do — especially olives,” she said. “All of the women I've talked to want to know about olives, because working with the trees can provide a good job.”

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is a foreign aid agency created by the U.S. Congress in 2004. It seeks to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth by forming partnerships with developing countries that are committed to good governance, economic freedom and investment in their citizens.

President Obama Has New Plan for Climate Change, Carbon Reduction

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 25 June 2013

Washington — President Obama outlined his latest proposals to reduce U.S. carbon emissions and prepare the nation for climate change June 25. At the same time, he pledged that the United States will lead the world in helping other nations make the transition to cleaner fuels, allowing this generation to bequeath a cleaner, safer planet to the future.

"Using less dirty energy, transitioning to cleaner sources of energy, wasting less energy through our economy is where we need to go," Obama said to a supportive audience on the campus of Georgetown University in Washington. "This plan will get us there faster."

Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from carbon-based fuels is a key strategy, and Obama said he is ordering the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set limits on emissions that can be released by new and existing electric utility plants. These facilities are the source of one-third of all emissions, the single largest generator of greenhouse gases in the United States, according to EPA data. The transportation sector and industry are the second- and third-ranking sources of greenhouse gases.

Obama said some utilities around the country are already modernizing with equipment that lessens emissions, suggesting that the federal government is only catching up with local leaders working to contain climate change. Nearly a dozen states are developing or using market-based carbon reduction programs, he said, a principal mechanism for carbon reduction outlined in the international Kyoto Protocol.

"More than 25 [states] have set energy-efficiency targets, more than 35 have set renewable-energy targets," Obama said. "Over 1,000 mayors have signed agreements to cut carbon pollution."

Another principal action in the administration's plan recognizes that the climate is already changing and some communities are bound to be hit by severe storms or rising sea levels. Hurricane damage in the northeast United States at the end of 2012 made city governments more aware of their vulnerabilities, Obama said.

"We've got to build smarter, more resilient infrastructure that can protect our homes and businesses and withstand more powerful storms," the president said.

The third major goal of the White House climate change strategy is that the United States must lead international efforts to prepare for the consequences of climate change that are already putting other nations and their citizens at risk. Obama said the United States must help other nations progress in adopting cleaner energy technologies and reducing carbon emissions at the same time those actions are taken domestically.

"We compete for business with [emerging economies], but we also share the planet, and we have to all shoulder the responsibility of keeping the planet habitable, or we're going to all suffer the consequences together," Obama said.

To speed the transition, the president said, U.S. industry will partner with other governments to speed their adaptation to natural gas, a cleaner-burning fuel than coal, currently used in many places. Obama said he's calling for an end to public funding for coal-burning plants overseas, unless they incorporate carbon-capture technologies or use the most efficient coal technology.

The United States is also working to facilitate private financial support to clean-energy projects in other countries, and Obama said he's calling for free trade in environmental goods and services, especially clean-energy technology, "to help more countries skip past the dirty phase of development and join a low-carbon economy."

A wave of applause went through the campus audience as he said developing-nation governments "don't need to make the same mistakes we made."

Another element of the climate change strategy is to enhance engagement with emerging economies such as India and China to reduce the use of substances with polluting byproducts.

Secretary of State John Kerry was advancing the president's agenda on international climate engagement even before the Washington speech. In India on June 23, Kerry told an audience that scientists have recently noted a higher carbon level in the atmosphere — 400 parts per million — than has ever been recorded before, and the evidence of warming is clear.

"When the Himalayan glaciers are receding, threatening the very supply of water to almost a billion people, we all need to do better," Kerry said.

Obama closed his remarks by encouraging his critics to keep in mind the judgment future generations will make of the actions taken today.

"Someday our children and our children's children will look us in the eye and ask us, did we do all that we could when we had the chance ... to leave them a cleaner, safer and more stable world," Obama predicted. "And I want to be able to say, 'Yes we did.' Don't you want that?"

India-U.S. Partnership Can Build Networks in Asia, Secretary Kerry Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 25 June 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry says that the friendship between the United States and India is "one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century," and that both countries are "uniquely positioned" to cooperate on some of the world's toughest challenges, including security, climate change and expanding economic

possibilities around the world.

Speaking in New Delhi June 23, Kerry said that as the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy find new avenues of cooperation, they can advance prosperity and security in South and Central Asia through initiatives such as the New Silk Road project, which envisions economic integration in the region with Afghanistan at the heart of a network of commerce.

"The reality is that Afghanistan's fortunes are tied to the region, just as the future of the region is tied to an increasingly stable, secure, prosperous future for the Afghan people. This is at the very heart of the New Silk Road vision, which I look forward to working with India to advance," Kerry said.

A more interconnected Asian continent would include rail links extending from the Caspian Sea to the Gulf of Thailand, as well as natural gas pipelines that would connect Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

"Expanding regional connectivity along the New Silk Road will actually ensure that all countries in the region benefit from Asia's economic miracle," he said.

On security, the United States has found India to be "an extraordinary partner ... on matters of defense preparedness, combating narcotics, counterterrorism and confronting radical, violent extremists," and the country plays a key role in the U.S. rebalance in Asia, Kerry said.

"Our security interests with India converge on a wide range of maritime and broader regional issues, and we value India's role in our mutual efforts to ensure a stable and prosperous Asia," he said.

The secretary noted that India will soon be the world's most populous nation and its third-largest economy. He predicted that its relationship with the United States will dramatically evolve over the next 10-20 years.

To build on their common values and interests, both countries need to increase their cooperation in areas such as climate change and economics, as well as security, "uniting not as a threat to anyone, not as a counterweight to some region or to other countries, but unite as partners building a strong, smart future in a critical age," he said.

As economic partners, both countries have seen their annual bilateral trade figures grow by nearly five times since 2000, with more than 50 percent of the growth occurring since President Obama assumed office in 2009.

In addition, bilateral foreign direct investment is now

nearly \$30 billion, which Kerry said is supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs in both countries.

But the secretary said there is room for closer economic ties and called for the United States and India to conclude a bilateral investment treaty "as soon as we can," which would provide "an important step towards bolstering investor confidence in both of our countries."

Kerry said India and the United States share "a common DNA" that compels both countries to look to the future with future generations in mind.

"If we're going to fulfill our responsibility to those who follow us, which is, I think, a fundamental moral responsibility for everybody, then we have to tap into that tradition of ingenuity and initiative. And we have to work now, quickly, urgently, to write a history that is worthy of the future. It's in our power," he said.

President Obama to Highlight Trade, Democracy in Africa Visit

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 24 June 2013

Washington — President Obama's second visit to sub-Saharan Africa will take him to Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania June 26-July 3, where he will encourage greater U.S. trade and investment links with the continent, as well as the strengthening of African democratic institutions.

Speaking in a June 23 conference call, Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes said Africa is "one of the most important emerging regions of the world," and a place of "extraordinary potential."

"When we look back 20 years from now, 30 years from now, we'll see this potentially as a pivotal moment when Africa took off in terms of economic growth."

Joining Rhodes on the call were White House Senior Director for African Affairs Grant Harris and White House Senior Director for Development and Democracy Gayle Smith.

Obama's focus on strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law is tied to Africa's economic future, Rhodes said.

"It's critical to Africa's economic growth, because where you have clear rules of the road and efforts to combat corruption, businesses will invest, and jobs will be created, and growth will take off," he said.

During Obama's stay in Senegal, he is expected to visit Goree Island and its museum, which serve as a monument and memorial to millions of Africans who were enslaved and transported to the Western

Hemisphere from the 16th through the 19th centuries. Rhodes said Obama also plans to attend a food security event in the country that will show technologies being used to improve the ability of African agricultural sectors to meet the needs of their people.

In South Africa, the president will speak to young Africans at a University of Johannesburg town hall meeting, visit a community center with Archbishop Desmond Tutu to see local solutions to health care challenges, and visit Robben Island, where former South African President Nelson Mandela and other anti-apartheid leaders were imprisoned.

Rhodes said that at the University of Cape Town, Obama will “lay out a vision for U.S.-African relations going forward” by making “his main framing speech of the trip about our Africa policy, focusing on these different areas of trade and investment, development, democracy, partnerships on behalf of peace and security.”

At his final stop in Tanzania, the president will visit the Ubungu power plant and speak about U.S. support for African economic growth, as well as visit the memorial to the 1998 terrorist attack that targeted the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, Rhodes said.

Harris said the challenge of Africa’s development and economic growth is ensuring that the benefits from both are spread to all of its people.

“On that front, we’re redoubling our efforts to create an environment that enables greater trade and investment. This includes encouraging things like regional integration and legal reforms that break down barriers to the free flow of goods and services. It gets at also the need for greater transparency in anti-corruption measures,” he said.

According to Smith, Obama will also be profiling the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition that the United States launched with African leaders and the Group of Eight (G8) countries in 2012 to promote food security.

The program is “built on the premise that if we can combine some reforms on the African side with some really targeted, strategic assistance on our side, we can leverage private capital flows into agriculture,” she said.

Less than a year after its launch, the initiative has expanded from three to nine countries, with over \$3.5 billion in letters of intent of private-sector commitments to invest in agriculture. Smith added that a 10th country will be joining the initiative in September.

Rhodes said the United States brings “a unique type of engagement to Africa,” recognizing that the continent

does not need handouts of assistance, but trade and economic growth that will allow the continent to build its own capacity for increased prosperity.

“The things that are really going to unleash growth on the continent is not an assistance program, per se, but rather the types of partnerships that we’ve been pursuing in areas like food security, for instance, that enable economic growth, that enable a broader base of people coming out of poverty; that enhance trade between Africa and the United States, but also within African countries and within the continent,” he said.

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